The following project proposal was created by a community partner of the Upstate Institute to describe the way they would like to engage with a Colgate student this summer. The research project proposed will be a full-time research project conducted by a Field School Fellow this summer. Below, the partner describes their organization and the research project, as well as a statement of benefit derived by the community for this project. The proposal also mentions logistical considerations and required skills for a student interested in doing this work.

Cayuga County Health Department, 8 Dill St., Auburn, NY 13021

Proposed Research Topic:

Compiling data and conducting community surveys (written and otherwise) to learn about the current health status of Cayuga County’s population and determine how the Cayuga County Health Department and the community can work together to improve the health of those residing within.

Mission Statement:

We promote and protect the health and well-being of the individuals, families and the community we serve.

Vision Statement:

Our team of caring, committed professionals will improve the health, prevent disease and provide essential health services with the community as our partner.

Project Description: How does the Cayuga County Health Department engage and outreach to residents to assess the existing health status of its community? What methods (surveys or focus groups) are used to identify and address concerns, barriers or social determinants of health that influence the health and well-being of the individuals, families and the community it serves and vows to promote and protect? How effective have existing programs been in improving health, preventing disease and providing essential health services?

To do this effectively and efficiently, we must assess the health needs of our community, plan and develop programs, and when needed policies, to address priority health needs and implement these strategies within the community. We review existing data, actively engage our community members and stakeholders to assist in identifying areas to improve our health needs, determine the factors that contribute to health issues in our area and we ascertain assets and resources that can be mobilized to address population health improvement. Priority issues are identified, strategies for action are developed, implemented, and evaluated to ensure measurable health improvement is established. Formally our Community Health Assessment (CHA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), represent our community and drive how we can best advocate for and address their needs.
Information not available in existing databases will require collection directly from our community. Written surveys will be distributed widely throughout the community on paper and/or online; One-on-one conversations with key community stakeholders will be conducted; Focus groups will be assembled and group-based conversation will be coordinated; Community-wide meetings will be scheduled. All data compiled will assist in assessing and analyzing the needs of this community allowing proper promotion in prioritizing health needs and instituting a plan to manage resources, implement programs, evaluate programs effectiveness and inform and education the public to help develop positive attitudes and skills conducive to good individual and community health.

**Statement:** The Cayuga County Health Department is in the initial stages of conducting the next round of CHA and CHIP, a process that extends well beyond a year. The Community Health Improvement Plan will be a systematic approach to addressing the health needs identified in the community health assessment and will select two priority areas that will be the focus for the health department and hospital to work on collaboratively. In addition to being integral in the direction of the Health Department, both documents are prerequisites to achieving accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board, a nationally recognized entity. Accreditation status is awarded after successful measurement of performance against recognized, practice-focused and evidenced-based standards. Achieving accreditation stands to improve the overall performance of those public health departments throughout the country awarded, and by extension, benefit the communities they serve.

**Logistical considerations:** The Cayuga County Health Department would welcome either a full-time or part-time student to work on this project. The student would work in our office, located in Auburn, NY and would be accompanied by staff to do some field work. The student would work with our Senior Public Health Educators who also serve as Public Information Officers for the Health Department. The student will evaluate existing data and assist in compiling updated information through means of community surveys, focus groups, interviews and/or town hall meetings. The student will be involved with many aspects of public health and will be exposed to many of our community partners.

**Training & Skills:** Skills necessary to complete this work are proficiency in Word and Publisher, good oral and written communication skills, ability to work independently with guidance from staff mentioned in this proposal and the ability to collect data. Student should have a sound foundation of the different types of social media. The student will learn how to compare pre and post data, how to effectively communicate with the public so that the main message is understood. The student will also be actively involved in staff meetings where they will have the opportunity to show what information they have collected and why they feel it is important that our organization utilize the means of communication/education in order to protect and promote the health and well-being of those in Cayuga County.